



Ministry of External Affairs

Government of India

[Home](#) › [Media Center](#) › [Speeches & Statements](#)

Media Statement by Prime Minister and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka during the visit of Prime Minister of Sri Lanka to India (15 September 2015)

September 15, 2015

Prime Minister of India: Your Excellency Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, Members of the media,

I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to you, Prof. Maithree Wickramasinghe, and members of your delegation.

Let me congratulate you once again for leading the United National Front for Good Governance alliance to victory in last month's parliamentary elections.

We are deeply honoured that you have chosen India as your first overseas destination. It is a happy coincidence that your last full term as Sri Lanka's Prime Minister coincided with the first NDA Government.

We thank you for your belief in and steadfast support for India-Sri Lanka relations. You are deeply valued friend, whose vision for Sri Lanka's progress and commitment to its pursuit is greatly admired in India.

This is a historic year for India-Sri Lanka relations as it is for Sri Lanka. We had the honour of hosting President Sirisena on his maiden visit abroad in February. I had the privilege of an extraordinary visit to Sri Lanka in March. Now, we have Prime Minister Wikramasinghe here.

Sri Lanka has voted twice this year for change, reforms, reconciliation and progress. There can be no stronger statement of Sri Lanka's democratic tradition. There can be no clearer sign of Sri Lanka's march towards a peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous future.

As a close neighbour and friend, we wish Sri Lanka every success; rejoice in your progress; and, assure you of India's unwavering support.

So, we are pleased that the Government of Sri Lanka has taken a number of significant steps in recent times. The leadership has shown remarkable political unity at a time of great hope.

I am confident that with the wisdom and will of the leadership in Sri Lanka and the support of the people, Sri Lanka will achieve genuine reconciliation and development, so that all Sri Lankans, including the Sri Lankan Tamil community, can live a life of equality, justice, peace and dignity in a united Sri Lanka.

Your progress is important for our two countries, South Asia and our maritime region.

Prime Minister and I had excellent discussions today.

We welcomed some significant developments in bilateral relations since March, including the currency swap arrangement. We also expressed hope that progress on key bilateral initiatives and projects will gather speed now.

We both want deeper economic engagement. We would like to see our trade grow and become more balanced for Sri Lanka. We discussed how we can achieve these goals in a more open and competitive Indian market, including through bilateral arrangements for trade and investments.

I also sought his support for Indian investors, who are keen to participate in Sri Lanka's economic development, especially in infrastructure, energy and transport sectors.

I offered India's full support to strengthen connectivity between our two countries to deepen human and economic links that will benefit all sections of our societies.

I assured Prime Minister Wickremesinghe of continuing commitment to our development partnership - in infrastructure, railways, energy, community development projects, agriculture, capacity building, science and technology, space and civil nuclear field.

We will continue to nurture people-to-people ties. We just finished an absorbing test series. We shall all miss the great Kumar Sangakara on the cricket field.

We recognise our closely aligned security interests and the need to remain sensitive to each other's concerns. We both reaffirmed our commitment to deepen our defence and security cooperation.

We will intensify cooperation in combating terrorism and work together for security and stability in our maritime neighbourhood. Sri Lanka is our largest partner in defence training programme and we will continue to expand our cooperation in this area.

Prime Minister and I also discussed the fishermen issue. We agreed that fishermen's associations on both sides should continue their efforts to find a solution.

I conveyed to him that this should be seen as a humanitarian issue that affects livelihoods. I informed him of the steps we are taking to encourage Indian fishermen to take up deep sea fishing.

In conclusion, let me say that India and Sri Lanka have a huge stake in each other's success, and in stability and development in our region.

This is a relationship that touches the hearts of ordinary Indians and Sri Lankans. It is also of great strategic importance to our two countries. With President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe, we can look to the future with great optimism.

Thank you.

Prime Minister of Sri Lanka (Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe): Excellency, honorable Ministers and distinguished friends:

I have come here after the elections as my first visit. It is in keeping with tradition, also continuation of Your Excellency's visit to Sri Lanka because soon thereafter we went in for elections for a new Parliament.

This new Parliament in Sri Lanka is unique and historic. We have a Government formed by the two leading Parties in Sri Lanka who had so far contended for power, at least from 1956 onwards. We are together for two years to see how we can work out a policy framework, an agreement on unity and reconciliation. The third largest party the TNA has now, as a result, taken over the leadership of the Opposition, and the fourth largest party has become the Chief Opposition Whip.

So, we have a Parliament in which all are being represented, and the changes we make to strengthen Parliament will give them all a bigger role to play so that Parliament itself will be involved in this historic opportune moment when amongst others we discuss how there can be stronger and deeper relations between Sri Lanka and India. So, it is an all-party effort and I am the first to come here conveying to you all, also to His Excellency, the desire of President Sirisena to continue this relationship.

We have had a long discussion on the different areas which concern our two countries, which matter to our countries. We have briefed His Excellency and the Foreign Minister on the developments in Geneva, a favourable outcome which will lead finally to the settlement of issues regarding human rights, reconciliation where all Sri Lankans are treated equally. We certainly look at the past but together we look at the future.

I must thank Your Excellency for the help given by your Government in resettling and reconstruction in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces. We are looking at how power sharing and devolution takes place within the Constitution, within a unitary state, and there is still scope for much more to be done.

This also gave us the opportunity to have deeper discussions in regard to security matters of combating terrorism and of ensuring security in the maritime areas of the Indian Ocean, how our armed forces and the police could work together. Peace and stability in the region is the key to our success. Whenever there is stability in the Indian Ocean, India and Sri Lanka prosper; and when there is instability, we get affected. But together with peace, we have looked at further cooperation between our two countries, a permanent agreement on cooperation on economic affairs with emphasis on trade and investment and also on technology which is essential for development.

I think we are in a unique position that this Government has a mandate from the people to continue trade

and investment arrangements with India and for technological development together with other countries. We hope this will lead to the next step where the private sector from both sides could cooperate.

We have been talking on these issues for a very long time. So, we think by end of this year the two sides should at least come to an agreement in principle and a framework document and certainly by mid next year we should have the agreements in place.

We have to remember that economic cooperation between India and Sri Lanka is nothing new, that this has been going on for over 2500 years. If we did not have trade between India and Sri Lanka, the two traders Tapassu and Balluka would not have come to Sri Lanka carrying a hair relic of the Lord Buddha. So, trade has in all its means been conducive to the development of Sri Lanka and to our programme of creating one million jobs in the next five years.

We have had the occasion of discussing the issue of fisheries in the Palk Strait and the need for the fishermen on both sides, who are also related, to have discussions and hopefully conclude it within a time-bound framework. From there onwards, there are opportunities for all of us to develop in that region also. Tourism was the other area of cooperation that we have been discussing.

So, this is just a beginning of discussions because we hope by mid next year we will be able to conclude all the agreements and to have the Prime Minister and his key Ministers all back in Sri Lanka from which our new relationship can go to a higher level.

I would like to thank the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government and on behalf of the President for all the cooperation given to us. And I would like to thank you again on behalf of the Ministers here and my wife for all the hospitality that has been given to us yesterday and today.

Thank you very much.

(Concluded)



[Terms & Conditions](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Copyright Policy](#) [Hyperlinking Policy](#) [Accessibility Statement](#) [Help](#)

© Content Owned by Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

Visitors: 135544269 , Page last updated on: 15/9/2015

Working hours at Headquarters 9:00 A.M. To 5:30 P.M.